

New Hampshire Dredge Management Task Force Meeting Minutes – January 23, 2013

The meeting was held on Wednesday, January 23, 2013 from 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Office, 222 International Drive, Suite 175, Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH.

Introductions and Announcements

Chairman Chris Williams asked members to introduce themselves. The list of attendees follows.

Attending members in alphabetical order:

Norm Farris, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
Chuck Gilboy, Representative Carol Shea-Porter
Olga Guza-Pabst, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Mark Habel, ACOE
Carol Henderson, NH Fish and Game Department (NHF&G)
Sarah Holmes, Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Michael Johnson, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
William Kavanaugh, ACOE
Frank Richardson, NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) Wetlands Bureau
Tracy Shattuck, Pease Development Authority-Division of Ports & Harbors (PDA-DPH)
Simon Thomson, Senator Ayotte
Chris Williams, Chairman, New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP)

Guests:

Michael Blake, Kittery Harbormaster
Keith Johnson, Intern, Senator Shaheen

Staff:

Mary Power, NHCP

Chairman Williams asked for comments or revisions to the draft minutes from the November 14, 2012 meeting. Hearing none, he stated that the minutes will be finalized and placed on the Task Force web site (<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/dmtf/index.htm>).

Budget and Legislative Update

Chairman asked Sarah Holmes of Senator Shaheen's office to provide an update. Ms. Holmes stated that the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee has developed a draft Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill and released it in December, 2012. It is not clear what the Senate's criteria will be for project selection under the current "earmark" ban. Holmes continued by saying it does not appear that the House is as far along with development of a WRDA as is the Senate. She intends to email DMTF members with the link to the draft WRDA bill. Chair stated that there is language in the

draft WRDA regarding the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Ms. Holmes said that Senator Shaheen has been supportive of funding the harbor maintenance program.

Chair then asked Simon Thomson of Senator Ayotte's office for an update. He reported that the Senate's Environment & Public Works Committee will be holding a hearing on the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund as well as a hearing on the mark-up of the draft WRDA bill. Senator Ayotte does not sit on the Environment and Public Works Committee and although she may not have much input on the bill, her office will be monitoring its progress.

Chair asked Chuck Gilboy of Congresswoman Shea-Porter's office for an update from the House. Mr. Gilboy stated that Congresswoman Shea-Porter is a member of the House Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee. She will be working on WRDA and welcomes input from DMTF regarding priorities. Chairman Williams stated that he will organize a meeting in the near future with the Congressional delegation, the ACOE and the PDA-DPH to discuss priorities funding.

Chair then asked Mark Habel to provide an update from the ACOE. Mr. Habel stated that under the existing Continuing Resolution, the ACOE received funds and is currently determining how that money will be spent. He stated that the WRDA bill is typically used to authorize new projects and in order to authorize new projects there has to be a draft Chief's Report from the ACOE. Since there haven't been many projects from the ACOE's New England District with completed Chief's Reports within the past four years, it's unlikely that the Congressional Committees would consider any new projects.

Hampton-Seabrook Harbor Improvement Project

Mark Habel stated that a small amount of work remains in the entrance channel that will likely be completed this week. Once this work is complete, the contractor will begin demobilize. This includes removing the pipeline from both Hampton and Seabrook Beach followed by installation of fencing in the back dune area of Seabrook Beach. Overall, the project went smoothly. The contractor did encounter some rock at the south end of the 8-foot anchorage in Hampton. As a result, the line between the 8-foot and the 6-foot anchorage was moved approximately 20 feet north. Chairman then showed aerial photos of the project taken by ACOE in mid-November, photos taken by DES staff in early December of the excavator recovery/salvage effort, and photos of the December 11th site visit for Task Force members.

Piscataqua River "Simplex Shoal"

Bill Kavanaugh, Project Manager, stated that the ACOE awarded a contract to Cashman Dredging in late December. The company is currently working in New York and New Jersey assisting with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts. Once their work is complete, in early-to-mid February, the contractor will move equipment to the Piscataqua River. Mr. Kavanaugh stated that the project will likely take less than two weeks to complete, in part, because the contractor will use a hopper dredge that isn't tidally limited and is relatively maneuverable. The project involves maintenance dredging at three locations

(Shoals #1-3) in the river. Advanced maintenance dredging will occur at Shoal #1 and traditional dredging with allowable overdredge will occur at Shoals #2 and #3.

Mr. Kavanaugh then stated that an issue has arisen as a result of the issuance of the ACOE's press release for the project. Portland Natural Gas Company responded to the press release and indicated that it has a pipeline beneath the river in the vicinity of Frankfort Island (known as Shoal #3 by the ACOE). The pipeline was apparently installed via directional drilling in the late 1990's. The ACOE is currently assessing the situation. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. Discussion followed.

Piscataqua River Turning Basin Improvement Project

Mark Habel, Project Manager, reminded members that the project involves the widening of the upper turning basin in the Piscataqua River from approximately 800 feet in diameter to 1,200 feet accommodate larger ships. The ACOE is currently waiting for PDA-DPH to provide a commitment letter and a financial statement in order for the ACOE to get approval for modification of the project cost-sharing agreement. Since the original cost sharing agreement between the ACOE and PDA-DPH was completed, study costs have increased, primarily due to the analysis of disposal alternatives. Chairman asked if there is any new information regarding disposal alternatives. Mr. Habel stated that the ACOE's base plan still includes disposal at the Isles of Shoals North site. The Town of Kittery, Maine has expressed interest in the rock and some of the sand from the project. Disposal of material in Kittery would be much cheaper, due to the shorter haul distance, than the Isles of Shoals North site. He continued by stating that the Town of Wells, Maine has indicated that it will take all of the material from the project and will pay the additional hauling costs. Newburyport, Massachusetts and Rye, NH have also expressed interest in the material, but both Towns want the ACOE to conduct additional testing of the material. The ACOE responded to both Towns indicating that they would have to incur the costs of additional testing. Neither town has since responded. Finally, Mr. Habel stated that depending upon the final approved alternative, the project will involve dredging of 370,000 to 720,000 cubic yards of sand and 16,000 to 30,000 cubic yards of rock that will require drilling or blasting. Chair asked for questions. Mike Johnson, NMFS, asked when the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) would be ready for review. Mr. Habel stated that the draft EA should be available for review in late spring.

As a follow-up to the discussion at the November 14th meeting, the Chair added that he had inquired about the status of the 2012 eelgrass survey for the Piscataqua River and Great Bay Estuary. The 2012 survey is complete, but the report has not been released. Dr. Fred Short who conducts the surveys is currently in the process of finalizing the 2012 report. Dr. Short indicated that as of August 2012, there are new eelgrass beds returning to the Piscataqua River in the vicinity of the turning basin. The beds are small and he hopes to survey the area in the summer of 2013.

Sagamore Creek & Portsmouth Back Channels

Bill Kavanaugh, ACOE, reported for Project Manager, Mike Walsh.

An eelgrass survey of the area was conducted by the ACOE last fall and nothing has changed since then.

A bathymetric survey of the channel is scheduled to take place in February in conjunction with the pre-dredge survey for the Simplex Shoal project. Discussion followed.

▪ **Schedule next meeting**

May 15, 2013, 1:30 PM* at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Office, 222 International Drive, Suite 175, Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH.

* The time of the meeting was subsequently changed to 10:30AM.